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Bureau of Land Management Canyon Country Fire Zone

Price Field Office, Moab Field Office, Monticello Field Office

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Prescribed Fires Planned for Late Summer Through Winter 2012 in Southeast Utah

The BLM Field Offices of Price, Moab and Monticello are planning several prescribed burns starting in mid-September. The proposed project areas include Bitter Creek, Black Ridge, Ray Mesa, Price Canyon and the Dolores River. The prescribed burns may continue through winter 2012. Local crews from the Canyon Country Fire Zone will staff the burns and monitor fire conditions. The prescribed burns will only be conducted under favorable weather and vegetation conditions in order to achieve desired fire effects and meet the burn plan objectives.

Fire managers use prescribed fires to reduce wildfire risk to communities, help restore and maintain ecosystem health and achieve specific resource objectives such as habitat improvement and fuels reduction. Prescribed fires give managers the greatest control over the size and intensity of a fire because they can time and plan the burning conditions under which they ignite.

Each prescribed burn has undergone an environmental analysis and has a detailed burn plan containing specific criteria regarding weather conditions and air quality that must be met to help ensure control of the burn as well as to minimize the potential smoke impacts to local communities. Smoke in the state of Utah is monitored by the Utah Division of Air Quality. Atmospheric conditions under which prescribed burns can be implemented have been pre-identified. Smoke may be visible to nearby residents for all projects. Most of the smoke will lift and dissipate during the warmest part of the day; some smoke may linger over the area and in drainages as temperatures drop during the evening.

The areas planned for treatment include:

Bitter Creek – This burn is located on the Utah/Colorado border north of I-70 and south of the Book Cliffs in the Bitter Creek Drainage. The primary objective of this treatment is to decrease the current wildland fire hazard by reducing the amount of cheatgrass and replacing it with native vegetation. This treatment will reduce potential negative effects from future wildland fire to both BLM and adjacent private lands while restoring the ecosystem and improving wildlife habitat. The Bitter Creek burn area is approximately 1,127 acres.

Black Ridge– This hazardous fuels reduction project was designed with three objectives: community wildfire protection, watershed restoration and wildlife habitat enhancement. It is situated on the southwest slope of the La Sal Mountain Range adjacent to the communities of Browns Hole, Pack Creek and La Sal. The burn will target 152 acres of land where travel and

utility corridors have been cleared to serve as fuels breaks, protecting critical infrastructure and public/firefighter access.

Ray Mesa-Ray Mesa is located on the Utah/Colorado border at the southern base of the La Sal Mountains adjacent to the communities of Old La Sal and the Woodlands at La Sal Subdivision. Ray Mesa is home to some of the last old growth ponderosa stands in the boundaries of the Moab Field Office. A low fire intensity under-burn is planned to lessen the potential for high-intensity wildland fire and to reestablish fire resilient vegetation beneath 150 acres of ponderosa pine stands.

Price Canyon- The Price Canyon prescribed fire is a hazardous fuels reduction project located in Carbon County, approximately five miles northwest of Helper. The prescribed burn consists of five separate burn units totaling 603 acres under native stands of ponderosa pine. The emphasis of the prescribed burn is to improve forest health, protect campground infrastructure and increase public and firefighter safety. Ponderosa pine is a fire-adapted species which means fire plays an important role in sustaining and rejuvenating forest health. A low intensity under-burn will also reduce the amount of fuel and maintain the open characteristic of the pine stand.

Dolores River-This project is located on the Utah/Colorado border west of Gateway, CO. The primary objective of this prescribed burn is to remove noxious weeds, including tamarisk and Russian olive. Due to the rapid spread of the tamarisk beetle and the increased fire hazard of dead and dying vegetation, the BLM is creating fuels breaks along riparian corridors to prevent the spread of a catastrophic wildfire while also protecting public and firefighter safety. Fuels breaks will involve the complete removal of tamarisk. Some units will receive follow-up herbicide treatments to ensure tamarisk eradication while other units may require periodic cutting, piling and burning of vegetative regrowth. Some areas may also be replanted and/or reseeded with native trees, shrubs and grasses to prevent reestablishment of non-native and exotic species.

For more information on fuel reduction and restoration projects, visit: www.utahfireinfo.gov.

The BLM manages more land - over 245 million acres - than any other Federal agency. This land, known as the National System of Public Lands, is primarily located in 12 Western states, including Alaska. The Bureau, with a budget of about \$1 billion, also administers 700 million acres of sub-surface mineral estate throughout the nation. The BLM's multiple-use mission is to sustain the health and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Bureau accomplishes this by managing such activities as outdoor recreation, livestock grazing, mineral development, and energy production, and by conserving natural, historical, cultural, and other resources on public lands.